567 The several categories of captives are as follows.

1. The Yemdaogo, all of whom are of foreign origin (Boussanga and Gourounsi) and either bought or captured during a war.

2. The daporé or dapobi (house slaves) who are the decendants of slaves. [88]

3. The bengaré, former slaves of the Peulh, who have abandoned their masters and put themselves under the sole authority of the Mogho Naba.

4. The Kamboiensé.

The Various Types of Slaves

567 563 Daporé ("living behind the house"). (a) The daporé belonging to the Mogho Naba. At Ouagadougou there is a section called Dapoya, and its inhabitants are called Dapobi. They are wrongly considered (even by themselves) to be captives. Of Kibissi origin (we have noted that the Kibissi, the Ninissi, and the Gourounsi were the original inhabitants of the present Mossi area), they came of their own volition to Obri-Bangrenaba (Naba Oubri's chief of the bangré slaves), and he presented them to the emperor. It has been impossible to find out who was reigning when they arrived. The Mogho Naba first installed them at Wavoussé and later behind his house where they acted as guards and also were entrusted with important responsibilities.

These are voluntary captives. They are therefore not yemsé in the usual sense of the word, since they were neither bought nor sold, and the emperor did not mistreat them, although he did not grant them, as foreigners, the same rights as those possessed by his [583] subjects. The dapobi could not marry Mossi girls. They were obliged to marry slaves, and that is perhaps why they are considered slaves themselves. The children of these marriages, called [89] dogyiri ("born in the house") make up the "house slave" class.

567 (b) Daporé of the Kamsaoughin and daporé of the canton chiefs. In addition to the foreign dapobi just mentioned, there are true dapobi who were either captured in battle or bought. The former are slaves of the Mogho Naba and are entrusted to the care of the Kamsaougho Naba, chief eunuch, who is responsible for guarding

567 part of the emperor's harem. The dapobi belonging to the canton chiefs, belonging to the kombemba, are of the same origin. While the Mogho Naba could not sell the dapobi of Kibissi origin, the emperor and the canton chiefs could do as they liked with the true dapobi. They were sold for the most trifling faults and their wives and children were either sent away with them or turned over to other deserving captives.

Slaves of the Crown. (a) The bangaré. These are Peulh captives who have gradually cast off the authority of their masters and who have submitted voluntarily to the authority of the Mogho Naba.

A herd of cattle is called nab'bangaré, and it seems likely that the word bangaré, "herd," to designate this type of slave came from that source. However, the bangaré are not solely former Peulh slaves since a free individual who has committed a serious crime in his [90] native village and fears reprisal comes to join the "herd."

Once presented to the Mogho Naba, they were henceforth considered slaves and, as such, immune from prosecution.

567 The principal bangaré villages, generally known as "independent
62 villages," are: Kalbo (province of Gounga); Manghin, Zaanga (canton of Zorgongo); Zaon'pighin, Payaobtinga (canton of Boudry); Nabasnoghin (canton of Nedogo); Bangar'Nabilin (canton of Zorgo); Gandaogo (canton of Zoungou); Boumintoré, Sidtenga, Mandié, Bougoumbarga, etc.

567 The emperor could supply himself from these "herds" when-
681 ever the need arose. Any bangaré who had committed serious crimes or who had been denounced as dangerous individuals who spread disorder in the villages or committed robbery were castrated and made into eunuchs or sold by order of the emperor.

[582] The bangaré intermarry since no free Mossi father would give them a daughter in marriage. This is solely due to the fact that if the emperor decided to sell a bangaré, his family would share the same fate. The father of the wife would not intervene in such a case, because this might be dangerous for him. So it is easily understandable that, under these circumstances, no father would seek such a match.

567 Bangaré chiefs. The chiefs of bangaré villages [91] are ap-
622 pointed by the Mogho Naba. The villages themselves are free of any

[171] Chapter 11

# Marriage, Birth, and Death

## Marriage

000 In this chapter we shall review all aspects of marriage throughout Mossi country. The customs are the same everywhere, ranging from the marriage of girls reared in the household of the naba to the institution of concubinage. We shall first deal with the most common forms of marriage, then discuss the matter of bride price, and finally conclude with a discussion of the social status of the Moaga woman.

587 Girls are married between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. With certain rare exceptions, a girl of sixteen or eighteen is never sent to her husband. Such an age is considered very unfavorable [843] for child-bearing, and it is even thought that children whose mothers are too young will not survive.

Young men marry between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.

[172]

562 584 Marriage of a girl reared in the household of a naba. Girls born of the marriage of a woman given to a former servitor by either province or canton chiefs became by right the property of the latter. These girls are taken from their parents when they are old enough to do some work and are entrusted by the naba to his wives. They are henceforth regarded as betrothed to the naba and are obliged to submit to all of the conditions of servitude which are imposed on the other wives.

When they reach marriageable age, they may be given, without either their own or their parents' consent, to freed servitors or to any individual who may have rendered some service to the naba.

This is the first type of forced marriage.

Marriage of a girl given by her parents. Since the girl is regarded as simply a "thing," a being without volition, she may be promised at birth. Very often gratitude for hospitality or the existence of an old debt is sufficient reason for promising a daughter.

583 to the sort of concubinage that "free marriage" is, as practiced in Mossi country.

The Situation of the Betrothed Couple during the Engagement

584 Generally speaking, the fiancé is supposed to avoid his betrothed before marriage. They treat each other with a kind of shy reserve.

Aside from the gifts made to the village elders and some cowries given to the future in-laws at the time of his first visit, no further demands are made on the fiancé.

584 The young man is formally forbidden to carry on an intrigue with
684 a woman in the girl's village. If he does so, not only may the engagement be broken, but the lover may never again set foot in the village on paid of death.

Breaking the Engagement

584 When an engagement is broken, the gifts received need not be returned. On the other hand, the death of the girl is not regarded as breaking the engagement; the family must, sooner or later, offer another daughter to the young man to replace the girl who died.

An engagement may be broken [179] automatically in case of adultery, discussed below, or in the event of a quarrel between the two families.

Marriage Between First Cousins

587 Marriage between first cousins is not allowed. There can be no valid union between the children of a brother and sister, between a man and the daughter of either his father's or his mother's brother.

588 However, it sometimes happens -- inadvertently -- that a girl
587 who has been given in marriage in a very distant village may find
751 that her husband is a descendant of a great-grandparent (material or paternal) in the same family as her own. Had this been known, the marriage would not have taken place. Ordinarily, distant relationship is not discovered until long after the marriage, after complicated genealogical research. In that case, one of the pair, usually the wife,

588 582 751 wears a bracelet made of copper and iron intertwined, kalembanga, which is believed to protect the wearer against any disaster due to the technically illegal marriage. The kalembanga is also believed to protect the children born of the union from sudden death.

## Polygyny

595 Polygyny is the rule throughout Mossi country. It is true that the number of wives varies with the resources and position of the individual. Mere heads of compounds who are somewhat well off may have [180] from five to eight wives and numerous fiancées. The [584] latter are usually reserved for the dakompa (older sons and younger brothers of the head of the family), assuming that these men will in turn render real service and be completely devoted to the head of the household.

There are many reasons for the practice of polygyny, but the main one is procreation. The under-nourished natives must rely on [853 834] the mother's milk to feed their babies and must therefore wait two or even three years before resuming sexual relations with a wife who is a nursing mother. Therefore, they prefer to have several wives.

## Consummation

585 When the young girl is taken to her husband, she is entrusted to a woman whom she will henceforth treat as "mother."

A few days after the departure of the cortege, whose composition we shall describe presently, the man claims his fiancée. She is taken at night to the nuptial hut, which has no special features, and no one is present at the consummation of the marriage. In this respect the Mossi differ from the Bambara, who have a griot or an old woman accompany the couple to help the young man, if necessary, overcome the girl's resistance.

It goes without saying that if the girl is found to be a virgin, the [181] husband is overjoyed. If she is not a virgin, the love which he may have felt for her before possessing her is much diminished. The man shows the girl his anger, certain that she will at least tell her mother about it.

582 Marriage is exogamous, that is, relatives do not marry if their
564 kinship is known. There are no sharply defined caste lines. The Mossi marry Yarsé Malinké, Bousanse, and Gourounsi, but cannot marry Peul nor Haoussa. A Mossi who does not belong to a caste may choose his wife among Mossi who do belong to one. The latter do not intermarry freely; iron workers cannot marry from among the drummers.

584 But to go back to our story. The girl has grown. The suitor has already made numerous gifts. In short, the time has come to proceed with the wedding. The girl's father /31/ summons the betrothed and tells him: "Come and see me on such-and-such a day with a chicken." The suitor joyfully returns to his village and tells the elders that he was told to bring a chicken. On the day set, the suitor takes the bird to the girl's family, accompanied by his friends. He hands over the chicken, and everyone goes to the home of the head of the family, or, in his absence, to a village elder. The father states before all present that he wishes to give his daughter to So-and-So. Congratulations are exchanged, and everyone goes home. Now the festivities must be arranged, the relatives and friends must be notified, and the millet beer must be brewed. Meanwhile, the relatives and friends who have heard the good news come to greet the bridegroom and bring him fifty or a hundred cowries to help him meet the expenses of the festivities.

When everything is ready, the bridegroom takes 500 cowries and a rooster to the girl's father and 500 cowries to the elder in whose household the bride shall live until her wedding day. The girl's relatives have prepared dinner, while the bridegroom provides the
[302] drink. A relative of the groom shaves the bride's forehead in a circle, and she retires to the inner courtyard where her father's wives wash her thoroughly and tie a cotton cord around her waist. She dons a white garment and goes to offer a gourd of beer to her betrothed who has remained outside with his friends. Everyone thanks the girl's parents and then they all leave. On the day after next, the groom
[431] sends his friends to greet the family of his betrothed with a basket of millet flour, four kalro pellets, and salt, which are all distributed among the village people. These festivities, with their attendant ceremonies, come closest to a formal betrothal.

585 The girl, however, remains with the head of the family or with the elder who takes his place! When all these preliminary ceremonies are over, the groom sends daily for his bride. Once the trousseau has

533 their praises and beating fiercely on their drums in the hope of receiving a few cowries, kola nuts, or at least some beer.

326 306 The smiths (saba), by which is meant those who work with iron, extract the metal from the ore and make it into hoes and hatchets. They sometimes work with wood, as in other parts of the Sudan, but usually this industry is carried out by members of another guild. The jewellers make bracelets, file teeth, repair worn hoes, etc. They are not smiths, properly speaking, and anyone may exercise their trade.

767 The undertakers (lada) offer gifts to the spirits of the deceased on the day of death or its anniversary (kouré). They also lay the corpse in the grave, and if death was due to illness, it is impossible to proceed with the burial without them. But anyone may dig the grave and carry the corpse. We shall discuss the undertakers again when funerals are described.

## Chapter 2. The Family

596 The structure of the Roman family and the power granted to the paterfamilias, its very foundation, have been greatly and justly admired. Something like the paterfamilias is to be found among the Mossi. Would that we also found the Roman matron! As we have seen above, every Mossi is subject to the Moro Naba, a province chief, a canton chief, and a village chief. He is also subject in a more immediate sense to the head of his family, and he can do nothing without his consent. If he wishes to marry, he consults the family head, in whose household his bride will lodge when she arrives in the village. On the other hand, the man who wishes to give his daughter in marriage never does so without consulting his family head, at whose house the girl will stay before she goes to live with her husband.

[551] The family is thus very tightly organized among the Mossi. Each family has a name which is seldom used; if one of its members was ever naba, the name derives from that of the first naba. Members of

● [582 784] the same family may not intermarry, and usually they all have the same kisgou (prohibition), whether the term designates a totem, a taboo, or something else altogether. The head of the family is its oldest member. Upon his death, the authority is transferred not to his

776 tangandé in every detail either, for only the village may have a tangandé, and there does not seem to be any magic pact unless the sacrifices offered are considered as such a pact, which does not seem justified. The tangandé-animal is never sacrificed, and no special initiation takes place.

774 761 [775] The closest thing to totemism among the Mossi seems to be their concept of the human soul, and yet it is not, properly speaking, a totem in the sense indicated by these authors. Every man has a soul that lives on after death and takes the name of kyma, while during life it is called siga. Shortly before death it takes the name of toullé [197] /85/ in Ouagadougou or toundo in Koupela, but siga, toundo, kyma are one and the same thing, one and the same principle. According to the Mossi, this soul is an animal, invisible of course, a snake, a crocodile, a deer, a hare. The soul is related to this animal, it belongs to the same family, so that to kill a snake or a crocodile in a village where the soul of the inhabitants is a snake or a crocodile is to kill an inhabitant of the village; every individual related to the snake has a snake in the village to represent thim, and he will die when his soul-animal dies.

774 784 Yet, and this runs counter to the definitions of totemism, the individual expects no aid from this animal, never sacrifices to it, and never kills it himself to renew the kinship pact. A person whose soul is a crocodile is forbidden to kill crocodiles in his own village, but he may kill them elsewhere, although he may never eat them, while he may kill the tangandé animal as long as he does so outside the tangandé, and he may eat it at any time. Some people, when they [766] find a dead soul-animal of their family near their village, render it funeral honors, weep, wail, and bury it as one of their own, but they offer it no gifts and hold no koureé. Generally it is merely covered with earth. The most widespread soul-animals are a kind of snake (bosombodro) and the crocodile. Several families may have the same [582] one, and marriage, although exogamic, is not forbidden between members of these families.

774 754 The soul may leave the body and in fact leaves it often, especially during the night. If children had a good time in a certain place, if they enjoyed themselves at someone's house, the soul returns there at night. This is when the worst is to be feared from the sorcerers; they may seize the soul by surprise, and its unfortunate owner will die.

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28



specially trained non-Mossi personnel, the use of irrigation, fertilizer, and the plow are their most important technological innovations. Despite their difficulty in communicating with the European agronomists under whose direction they work, they soon master these agricultural techniques. Patterns of consumption are also altered, rice taking the place of millet as the staple in their diet. After some initial illness they become accustomed to rice but suspect that it is less nourishing than their traditional diet.

Far more difficult than adjusting to either the new technology or the diet is adaptation to the changed social organization. Trying to ease this adjustment but with an imperfect understanding of traditional Mossi institutions, the project administration has tried to re-create their forms in the area of resettlement.

Despite this, the new colonist finds himself isolated among social forces he does not understand. The attempt to reproduce the traditional pattern of residential grouping is meaningless in the absence of the lineage. Separated from his kinsmen and his community, the colonist is confused by social institutions whose resemblance to those he has known in the Yatenga exists only on the level of form. He does not like or understand being housed with strangers as if they were his kinsmen. Equally incomprehensible is an approximation of the familiar political organization which, ignoring the traditional sanctions of chieftainship, has a former earth custodian, whose supernatural role has traditionally precluded the exercise of political authority, as paramount chief.

Despite the efforts of the European administration to reproduce their structural appearance, the institutions of Mossi society are so interrelated that the change in the organization of economic activity has created new needs which make alterations in traditional institutions inevitable. Rather than permitting the colonists to modify their indigenous social organization to fit these new needs, the social structure rigidly imposed by the Europeans has impeded the Mossi in their efforts to adjust their institutions to the changed situation. The delegation of authority to inept administrative appointees thinly disguised as chiefs and to the older, least adaptive members of the settler communities only complicates the problem of adjustment.

Isolated from their kinsmen and the protection of their ancestral spirits, the colonists miss the emotional and social satisfactions of extended family living as well as the security of an established position in the community in which they were born. Adherence to the traditional kinship organization, with its emphasis on obedience to the elders who have remained behind in the Yatenga, makes marriage at the Niger project almost impossible.

The young men born and raised at the project resent the tradition

664 554 "The wives of the Moro Haba never give birth or raise their children at his own place of residence, but only in one of the eunuch villages. In theory they do not stand above the wives of common natives, but in practice they enjoy high consideration among the Mossi, like all that is connected with the Moro Naba.

"The sons of the sovereign, once weaned, are entrusted to a province or canton chief who is put in charge of their education. [582] At the age of ten they are married and settled in a village, where they live, surrounded by a court, but without necessarily being given a territorial command.

"The prerogatives attached to the title of Moro Naba's son are vast as long as the monarch is alive. They grant the right to steal, to loot, and even to kill with impunity.

"Upon the death of the Moro Naba, his sons become mere nakomsé (sons of chiefs) whose position nevertheless remains quite privileged.

643 644 554 "One of the sons of the deceased sovereign, however, is granted special privileges. At the death of the Moro Naba, the latter's wives elect one of his young sons who adopts his name and, so to speak, perpetuates him. He has no /territorial/ command, but he is surrounded by a court similar to that of the Moro Naba, he enjoys respect almost equal to that paid to the latter, and he is a sacred figure. No one has the right to contradict him or to harm him.

644 534 "As for the Moro Naba's daughters, although in principle they do not stand above ordinary Mossi girls, in practice they are treated with the strictest respect by all natives. Once married, they have almost complete freedom of action vis-à-vis their husband, and they often take advantage of this to lead a most unruly existence.

643 766 "When the Moro Naba's death has been verified, his burial is carried out and followed by the funeral ceremonies, which are held in the same fashion as for a common native, with the sole difference /574/ that they have more brilliance and that the sacrifices are more sizable.

642 672 "For the whole duration of the interregnum, the land falls into a state of complete anarchy. Everyone has the right to kill, loot, and steal as he pleases. Convicts who are serving sentence are fully pardoned and set free.

431 583 "I. If by negligence, forgetfulness, or because of an absence (journey), the prospective husband does not make the annual gifts, he will be refused the girl on the day when he comes to have her taken to his home, and he will lose all his rights over her.

"Nevertheless, he will regain all his privileges if in one installment he pays to the head of the girl's family and to her mother all the gifts which he ought to have made during the period of his absence or forgetfulness.

"The head of the family cannot refuse this collective gift and thereby oppose the marriage.

"II. The husband has forgotten to make the gifts and does not come to the home of the family head when the young girl has reached puberty.

"A. If he lives in the area, the failure to call on the head of the family at the required time is regarded as a relinquishment of his rights over the girl. The head of the family may then dispose of her again.

"B. The fiancé has been away on a journey for a long time and is still absent when the girl reaches puberty.

"The head of the family has the fiancé's brother called to him. He offers the girl to him as his bride. The brother is not required to accept, and if he does not, the head of the family recovers all his rights over the girl."

582 Celebration of the marriage. Consummation. —"The girl must have reached puberty (15 or 16 years) in order to be taken to her husband's hut. It is even customary to wait six months or a year after she was first in a state of zim (zim means "blood" in Mossi).

As for the husband, it is equally necessary that he must have attained the age of 17 or 18.

585 The formalities of the marriage ceremony are very simple in Yatenga.

When the betrothed girl has reached puberty, the husband calls on the family head to ask for her. The family head can tell him /239/ to wait six months or a year at most, a delay which the fiancé is required to observe, but usually the head of the family replies that his future wife may be fetched in a few days. The fiancé then hands him 431 273 a bag and two goatskins full of millet and withdraws. This grain is used to make dolo which is drunk by the girl's entire family.

585 431 Each woman living in the same soukala makes a gift of one or two gourds to the girl's mother. The father and the head of the family give her two large baskets. These objects will make up the bride's trousseau.

585 On the appointed day the fiancé sends two men of his family, one
[431] of whom is usually his brother, to fetch his bride. These two natives come to the home of the family head with 13 canari /jars/ of dolo. Then the feasting begins.

[782] The father takes his daughter to the hut of the ancestors, cuts the throat of a chicken on the fetish stone so the future marriage will be happy, and discloses to her the name of her husband.

The young fiancée, escorted by two old women of her family and the two emissaries of her fiancé, proceeds to the latter's home.

For four days the young bride will stay in a hut alone with the old women. During this period, the old women give her all the customary advice and show her the course of behavior she must follow to please her future spouse.

The bridegroom comes every day to greet the old women, but during this interview the young girl takes great care to hide her face from him.

On the third day, in the evening, the husband has a sheep and goat slaughtered. He chooses a leg of mutton which he puts aside with the
[252] animal's skin, and he has a large quantity of sarabou /millet mush/ cooked along with the remaining meat. He takes the whole thing to the old women. They distribute the sarabou among all the members of the family and carefully put aside the leg of mutton and the skin which they will take on the following day to the girl's mother to show her that her daughter has indeed been delivered to her husband.

Then the husband has his bride brought to his hut where the marriage is consummated.

There is nothing compulsory about this four-day waiting period. It happens frequently that the consummation of the marriage takes place on the day following the young girl's arrival. Occasionally it is delayed for several days when, as sometimes happens, an elderly fiancé gives the bride who was originally intended for him to his son or to some other member of the family.

The marriage is valid from the day of the departure of the old women who brought the girl to her husband's soukala.

The consummation of the marriage is by no means necessary to validate the union. If the husband neglects his new bride for too long, however (a year, for example), she may demand explanations." /240/

582 Impediments to marriage. —"The impediments to marriage," says Vadier, "are as follows.

582 I. Differences of tribe or caste. The Mossi may not contract
326 marriage with blacksmiths. This is absolutely forbidden. However,
564 they may marry among the Foulsé, Samo, Peul, Yarsé, etc."

This calls for several remarks. The blacksmiths of Yatenga are Foulsé and not Mossi. However, it is not a tribal difference which dictates the prohibition under discussion, since the Mossi can marry among the Foulsé as a whole. It is rather a difference in caste. It must be noted, as we said above /not translated/, that the common Foulsé cannot marry blacksmiths either.

[171] Here, as in all of the /French/ Sudan, blacksmiths are both feared and scorned. Basically, they are regarded as fearful sorcerers.

582 II. Kinship. There must be a lapse of 200 years between the time of the betrothed couple and the time when their common ancestor lived. This is likewise an absolute impediment.

III. If a Mossi has relations with a young girl or woman belonging to his fiancée's soukala during the period of his engagement, the marriage cannot take place.

This impediment, however, is not absolute. If the guilty man begs for the forgiveness of the family head and the latter accords it, the union may be effected later."

582 IV. Unnatural practices. The marriage cannot take place: (1) if
839 the betrothed man has been caught in the act of sexual intercourse with a she-ass (a phenomenon none too rare in Yatenga); and (2) if the betrothed girl has relations with a native who had sexual intercourse with a she-ass. These impediments are absolute.

This is why the inhabitants of a Yatenga village (Dénia) who are reputed to have had relations with asses in former times may not marry outside their locality.

582 V. Infirmities. If the fiancé is blind, the marriage may not take
[132] place unless the girl consents to it. No one can constrain her to do so.

VI. Leprosy. The same applies when the fiancé has leprosy.

VII. Impuberty of the betrothed pair. The marriage cannot take place unless both parties are nubile. This is an absolute impediment, but in practice the problem rarely arises.

VIII. Insanity of one of the betrothed."

582 Question of virginity. The girl's virginity is not very important
830 here and, it must be pointed out, far less so than among the Bambara. This is, incidentally, connected with the fact that the marriage bond is less sound and the separation of the spouses easier to obtain. A combination of related facts makes the institution of marriage and

582 the household a more serious and more binding affair among the
836 Bambara than in this particular region. /241/

Vadier says on the subject, "The fact that a young girl has had relations with a native other than her husband prior to marriage is by no means an impediment to the marriage.

"Many betrothed girls have lovers. It even happens quite frequently that their fathers are forced to go in search of them at the homes of the young men with whom they have run away. Actually, this matter is of no concern to the husband. As long as he gets the woman, the rest matters little to him. It is not unusual for a girl to bring a child 848 which she had by another man into her husband's home. This child eventually returns to its natural father."

582 This picture is painted in rather bleak colors. In reality, fathers
836 and mothers do try, as best they can, to prevent their daughters from
585 taking lovers. They do not like to see them go to the "tom-tom," but they can scarcely keep them from going, and often the "tom-tom,"
626 like our own country dances, plays havoc with a young girl's virtue.
684 If the girl says nothing, everything goes well. Since among the Mossi there is no exhibition of the skirt cloth following the consummation of the marriage, there is no evidence. Even if the husband knows ahead of time or finds out at the last moment, he says nothing out of shame, to avoid being scorned. When the father leads his daughter to the hut of the ancestors before sending her to her fiancé, however, she often does not dare enter the hut. Having lost her virginity and fearing that she might be killed by the ancestors, she admits her wrongdoing to her father. Sometimes she may have the courage or the effrontery to enter the ancestral hut, but later, if she falls ill in her husband's hut, she will interpret her condition as the ancestors' vengeance for the sort of moral perjury she committed by entering their hut in a state of transgression, and she will confess to her husband what she has done. In both cases the lover is confronted, in the first instance by the father, in the second by the husband, and a goat, two canari of dolo, and a chicken are demanded from him. A sacrifice will be offered to the ancestors with these various items to ask their forgiveness, they will pardon the wife and the lover, and order will be restored.

848 Sometimes, as mentioned earlier, a child is the fruit of a girl's passion. The lover having made reparation and the ancestors being satisfied, the husband will accept the child along with the girl, but

848 as soon as the baby is old enough to leave its mother, the husband, not wishing to keep it with him, will return the child to its natural father.

582 171 In short, virginity is not rigidly demanded of the girl, although it is considered better and more respectable than non-virginity. The Mossi are not as demanding on this point as the Bambara, and in this, according to my data, they are like all other Voltaic peoples.

684 Let us note one further detail. If the lover from whom reparation is demanded for the damage caused, that is to say, the payment of the goat, chicken, and two canari of dolo, does not want to give them, the husband would formerly appeal /242/ to the Moro Naba, who forced the lover to pay what he owed and in addition confiscated for himself a part of his goods for his salary as a judge. If the lover owned nothing, his family paid for him. Nowadays, the village or canton chiefs are still approached about such matters, and they force the lover to make the customary payment.

593 Rights and duties of the husband and wife. —The husband owes assistance and help to his wife. He must protect her and come to her aid whenever necessary.

The husband must support his wife. To secure food, he usually belongs to a work group, as we have seen earlier. The work group sustains the husband and wife for seven months out of twelve. The rest of the time, the husband maintains the wife with the produce of his small fields. The wife also has her own little patches of cultivated land (as big as a handkerchief), but they are not used to procure food for the household unless the husband is completely destitute. Hence, the produce from these little patches of soil usually goes to the wife herself.

In any case, it is the husband and not the group who must provide clothing for his wife. He does this with the earnings from his small fields.

593 596 If the husband should refuse to support his wife, although able to do so, she would take her complaint to the head of her spouse's family. If the husband still refused to support her after the intervention of the family head, the woman would regain her freedom and could return to her family.

593 The husband must see to his ailing or invalid wife's upkeep until her death.

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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175 797 871 schools and 4,000 Moslems in Ouagadougou (seven percent of whom were non-Mossi). By 1944 there were about 240 schools and approximately 25,000 Moslems. The last census, 1954, did not record the number of Koranic schools but gave the figure of 60,000 Moslems in the Ouagadougou region.[3] The 4,000 Moslems of Nobéré comprise 42 percent of that district's population. With the exception of one Catholic school master and the Catholic catechist who came to the district during 1956, the population is pagan. It might be relevant to point out that Nobéré has the highest percentage of Moslems in Kombissiri, an administrative unit (a subdivision) which has 152,000 pagans, 23,000 Moslems, 3,000 Catholics, and about 100 Protestants.

797 634 As noted above, Islam first came into the Nobéré district with Ngado, who replaced a dissident pagan chief, but Ngado's lineal descendants reverted to paganism until a few years ago when the present district chief became a nominal Moslem. The cadet sons of Ngado did not revert to paganism, and today all the noble sublineages of the district are Moslem. We may note here that one of the main aspects of Islamic proselytization in this district, as elsewhere among the Mossi, has been the conversion of persons who do not hold strategic positions vis-à-vis the ancestors. The present chief is no exception to this rule, because he is only a nominal Moslem. His eldest son is the only one in the family who is not a Moslem—a status which is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain in a growing Moslem population. The chief himself became partially converted to Islam in gratitude to a Moslem Hausa trader who cured his illness. He recites the five daily prayers and observes most of the prescriptions of [769] Islam, but he still drinks European beer, subscribes to many pagan rites and beliefs, and supervises the annual Péléga or sacrifice to the ancestors. This dual allegiance is politically expedient because the chief can function as the head of the Moslem community as well as the traditional head of all the people. He does have occasional difficulty with intolerant Moslems who wish him to become a devout Moslem, and with the traditionalists who claim that today the crops are smaller, the people sicker, and the women barren because of the neglect of the ancestors. However, with the approach of holy days, these differences are resolved in the interest of community harmony.

622 797 769 The chiefs of the villages under the overall command of the district chief are mainly pagan, since they are descended from the district chief replaced by Ngado. Yet they command villages inhabited by the noble Moslem sublineages of the ruling house as well as by commoner lineages. The village chief cannot become a Moslem because he too is responsible for sacrifices to the ancestors, without whose help his people would suffer. He does not take an active part in Moslem festivities, but receives the homage due a chief from the Moslems on these and other occasions. However, most village chiefs show an interest in Moslem affairs, and one of them, the chief of Vooko, built a prayer-circle (*misseri*) for Moslems who came to pay homage.

622 797 582 The pivotal role which the village chief plays in the exchange of wives between Moslems and pagans has led indirectly to the increase of the Moslem population. Before the French conquest he gave the Moslems more wives than

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he received from them. This unequal exchange, plus the nobles' prerogative of seizing the wives of pagans, contributed to the increase of the Moslems.

The conversion of Mossi to Islam is sometimes accompanied by a rupture in the relationships between persons involved in "friendships" with a view of obtaining wives. A great quarrel developed in the district between a pagan chief and a recent convert who refused to give the chief a daughter promised as a wife. The chief became furious and claimed that the Moslem had broken a promise made years ago, but the Moslem claimed that it was against his new religion to give his daughter to a pagan. It is not true that Moslems in the village do not exchange wives with pagans, but the Moslems often try to convert their pagan friends so that the brides will not have to revert to paganism. The chief's difficulty was that he could not become a Moslem because of his ritual and ceremonial relationship with the ancestors. The Moslem men do not have such difficulties with their pagan wives because most women follow their husbands' dictates in religious and other matters. Many Moslem men attempt to prevent their wives from having sacrifices made to the ancestors, but if a woman really wishes such a sacrifice she can easily have it arranged through her pagan relatives. If a woman married to a Moslem refuses to observe Islamic practices, she is liable to divorce and runs the risk of having her children taken away.

Mossi anxiety over children is often instrumental in converting them to Islam. When a woman is barren or her young children die, she consults a soothsayer (*barga*). She is either told that her Tengkougre benefactor was not amply rewarded and recalled the children, or that her "Moslem" children (children who wished to be Moslems) were angry because they were given pagan names. In the latter case she is advised to make a gift to a Moslem and to ask her husband to build a Moslem prayer-circle outside his hut so that when her children "return" (are born again) they will see it. Finally, she is advised to give all her children Moslem names. I could discover no reason why the pagan soothsayers advise these anxious parents to adopt Islam, except that they hope that complicated prescriptions will be more efficacious. Nevertheless, so effective is this technique for gaining converts to Islam that even members of the family of the chief pagan priest are not immune to it. Furthermore, once a woman has a Moslem child, all her other children must be Moslems or they will die. A man whose children are all Moslem has no recourse except to adopt Islam if he wants a funeral, because his Moslem sons may not give him a pagan funeral.

Every Mossi, whether Moslem or non-Moslem, wishes a proper funeral, and now that travel has increased the fact of being Moslem or pagan is of great importance. Many young migrants to Ashanti have reported that their dead pagan comrades were unceremoniously disposed of, while the local Christians and Moslems took care of their dead coreligionists. But despite this fact, and the belief of administrators and missionaries, I found no evidence that the seasonal and other migration of Mossi youth to Ghana and the Ivory Coast have contributed very much to the spread of Islam. It is true that some of the thou-

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794 efficacy of ancestor veneration and do not "kill chickens" to the ancestors, but
595 they maintain that it is a man's duty to have many wives so that he may have
842 children to succeed him. Furthermore, since Mohammed himself decreed that his followers may keep four wives, provided they treat each with the same degree of kindness, there is no conflict between Islamic tenets and Mossi practice of polygny. The average Moslem has two wives, but even the few men in the district who have more than four wives do not appear overly concerned about transgressing the tenets of their faith. Mossi Moslems have not adopted the [582] paternal parallel cousin marriage so common among other Moslems, and show surprise when told that Islam permits such marriages. However, they have modified their marriage behavior to harmonize with what they consider an Islamic tenet that "a man should not marry the widow of his father." The Moslem Mossi profess to look with horror on these marriages among their pagan brothers, preferring the levirate instead.

794 The Moslems' attitude toward the low status of women in Mossi society
562 has not changed, and in one respect it can even be said that this attitude has been strengthened. Many Moslem wives now cover their faces, and many El Hadjis have attempted to place their wives in purdah by preventing them from going to the market for fear they would come in contact with pagan men. The development of this practice is running counter to the growing emancipation of Mossi women, who have just begun to leave their villages for periodic visits to the larger towns. Nevertheless, the important fact is that the Mecca pilgrims have the opportunity to see Moslem women playing roles which are forbidden or unknown to Mossi women. And while it is true that the Mossi pilgrims would not easily adopt and foster monogamy, their receptivity to new Islamic beliefs and customs might have a liberating effect on their treatment of women. Once institutional and cultural changes have been accepted by the El Hadjis, they are likely to spread quite rapidly throughout the society because men who have visited Mecca are believed to have returned filled with wisdom and understanding.

797 Christianity came to the Mossi on January 24, 1900, shortly after French conquest. As noted above, the first missionaries were well treated, but the Mossi balked at the attempts at conversion. Nevertheless, by 1919 the White Fathers of the Catholic missions had established several centers, among which was the district of Manga where this study was conducted. Manga is considered a Catholic district, but there are only 3,000 Catholics out of a population of 124,000—which also includes 9,200 Moslems and five Protestants. [184] Thus, in contrast to Moslem Nobéré, which has no Catholics or Protestants, Manga, like most districts in Mossi territory, has a Moslem community.

The conversion of the Mossi in Manga to Catholicism follows the classical pattern of missionary proselytization in the country. Monsignor Socquet (1956:62) states that the Mossi always react to attempts at conversion with the statement: " 'We are looking at our chief,' that is to say, 'We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is favorable to it, then we will not go against his will.' " Socquet concludes: "It is thus understandable

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797 555 administration to have one of their converts, a younger son of the late chief, elected to the district chieftainship over his elder brother. This belief is probably unfounded, since the Moro Naba seems to be electing the literate sons of chiefs to their fathers' positions so that educated chiefs, and not educated commoners, can serve as members of French parliamentary bodies. Unfortunately, the people of Manga do not understand modern political problems, and have accepted the new chief only because of their traditional respect for the chieftainship.

634 797 769 [602] The conversion of the Manga chief to Catholicism has not engendered many problems for his pagan subjects. The chief's primary duty—to begin the yearly ceremonial cycle of sacrifices to the ancestors—has been taken over by his father's brother, who is now considered the ritual head of the chiefly lineage. Nevertheless, to the chief still accrue the gains of this ceremony because his followers pay him homage and bring him gifts on his birthday, which comes at this period. Moslems in the community also pay their respects at this time, and they prefer his Catholic birthday celebration to the bloody sacrifices of chickens to the ancestors. On the other hand, the chief shows little of the common Catholic disapproval of Moslems and sends gifts to their leaders on the Moslem feast days. He also entertains the district Moslems when they come to pay him homage.

797 634 ● 582 [562] The Catholic chief does not act as a pivot in the exchange of wives between pagans of his lineage and the other lineages. This task now falls to his father's brothers. Nevertheless, as district chief he is constantly involved with the marital problems involving pagan parents and their Catholic children. The main source of the difficulty is that Catholic girls are encouraged to refuse to join their pagan husbands when so ordered by their parents. The mission not only insists that the girl freely choose her own husband, but encourages her to reject a polygynous union. Catholicism thereby interposes itself between the girls and their society, not only impairing the prestige of their fathers and lineages but also giving the girls more freedom than they would ordinarily possess.

The pagans claim that by encouraging girls to choose mates without parental consent, the Catholics are really taking the opportunity to obtain wives for young Catholic men. Paradoxically, there seems to be some truth in this, since Bouniol, a White Father, states:

> A Mossi who is unable to acquire a wife by [traditional] means must either remain unmarried or seduce another man's wife . . . they must choose between celibacy and immorality.
>
> Such a state of affairs creates many problems for the missions, especially as the system is recognized and sanctioned by the colonial authorities. . . . Young native Christians are obviously placed in a very awkward position. Their conversion angers their parents, who refuse to give them a wife; neither will their friends bestow a daughter upon them, because they know that they will not receive one in return, since a Christian may not give a daughter in marriage to a pagan. . . . *Consequently, unless the missionaries help them to find a wife, they must remain unmarried—a very discouraging prospect!* (1920:160 italics mine).

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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When a young Catholic receives a wife through the mission, he may visit her father and pay the customary respect by giving him kola nuts and brass coins. The father of a mission girl may accept or reject his son-in-law as he sees fit, but formerly he could not defy the power of the missions.

A pagan youth who wishes to marry one of the mission girls has to discuss the matter with the priests and swear publicly that he will become a Christian. Before 1946 the young man had to fulfill his promise or be intimidated by the chief and the missionaries until he relented or fled the district. Today, however, the priests usually abandon their efforts to obtain the conversion of the young men after three months have passed. In some cases the young men take their wives and move to other districts, and return only after the girls have given up Catholicism. Despite the lure of wives from the mission, not many young men become Christians on this account because the Mossi are still concerned primarily with family relationships and the effect that conversion would have on these relationships.

The church's prohibition of polygyny is by far the most serious bar to the spread of Catholicism. Many men do not adopt Catholicism simply because they fear that monogamous marriages would not produce children. Father Paternot (Considine 1954:103) has cited a study purporting to show that Christian Mossi have more children than the pagans, but the ordinary people of the district would not accept the facts he presented. They cite their personal experience to the contrary. Dim Delobson (1934:136), a Mossi converted to Catholicism, states:

> A certain number of Christians of my acquaintance whose wives did not have children during the first years of marriage had recourse to magical practices in order to get children. These simple people thought that although they had an omnipotent God beside them, they could impudently—after all the good priests will not know about it—ask the little, but also powerful gods to grant them some material favors here on earth. When the gods given children were taken for Holy Baptism, they were given Christian names instead of the names of the earth shrines, and they did not wear magical charms which would have indicated to the priest the real state of affairs. Nevertheless, the children were bathed in water to which magical potions were added, and when the mothers went to visit their parents, sacrifices of chickens were given to the benevolent Tengkougas.

The Mossi's strong desire for children is admittedly one of the main reasons for leaving the Catholic Church so that they can take other spouses in addition to barren ones. The church has now belatedly recognized this problem and, knowing that it cannot prevent men from taking plural wives, allows them to come to church but prohibits them from taking the Mass.

Many cultural factors besides the desire for children make polygyny important for the Mossi, and make conversion detrimental to the functioning of their family system. Because of lineage opposition to their conversions, some converts are forced to establish nuclear households—a practice out of harmony with the normal rhythm of Mossi life. The reason for this disharmony is that Mossi women married to Catholics must work alone instead of with

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indirectly from the good will of his ancestral spirits whose benevolence Ego often invokes.

Ambivalence follows from other characteristics of the relationship. Resentment of Ego's depredations of her husband's property and jealous concern for the inheritance rights of her own children appear to be at least partially balanced by a share of the affection her husband shows for Ego. However, joking in this relationship is asymmetrical. The mother's brother's wife takes the more aggressive role, and from the vehemence of her joking, and the structural nature of the relationship, it appears likely that amity lies less heavily in the balance than hostility. The groups to which the two parties belong are equal in status. Their respective positions within them, of course, are not, and this is reflected in the aforementioned asymmetry. Each party is obviously independent of the authority system of the other.

### *Joking Between Siblings-in-Law*

Siblings-in-law who joke are separated by the rule of sib exogamy observed among the Mossi. Reciprocity is basic to the marriage contract that unites their respective kin groups. Several factors tend to create ambivalence in the relationship. Both kin groups—in particular, the extended families of the two marriage partners—profit from the reciprocal tie established between them, but possible failure on the part of either group to reciprocate adequately, particularly with regard to marriage payments, constitutes a persistent source of potential friction. Moreover, the Mossi observe the levirate. Joking between siblings-in-law who are potential spouses, yet are presently constrained by a prohibition against adultery, has frequently been ascribed the function of reducing tension in a situation of conflict. The kin groups of siblings-in-law are always structurally equivalent because groups occupying significantly different strata in Mossi society do not intermarry. As members of autonomous descent groups the participants are obviously independent of one another.

### *Joking Between Sibs*

Sibs (or lineages) whose members joke with one another are, of course, also separate groups.[2] They are always united by a strong tradition of reciprocal social and economic aid. Ambivalence apparently stems from the conflict between this tradition of reciprocity and actual competing claims to land. The origin of joking relationships between two descent groups is often ascribed to the alleged fact that, when they first arrived in the village, leaders of both falsely claimed to the chief that he and his kinsmen had arrived first, and thus had a prior right to land, and that the members of the other group were their slaves. Despite their jocular allegations, both groups are in fact structurally equal and independent.

### *Joking Between Age-Sets*

Joking between age-sets within an age-grade varies with the generational

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
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ship itself and the contract of interlineage co-operation and solidarity which every marriage serves to establish or reinforce.[4]

Although this joking interchange is seen in its full implications when there is an immediate source of dissension between marriage partners, it may also occur in the absence of any specific difficulty. Then it is apparently indulged in simply because it is expected, and for the pleasure which the Mossi, like all people, derive from an occasion to exercise their wit. It is this relatively disinterested joking which has been most frequently described in the literature, and this may account for the failure of many scholars to perceive more fully the important social and psychological functions which joking may fulfill.

## Conclusion

This paper has been written as a tentative step toward a reformulation of the various and disparate observations on joking contained in the anthropological literature. I have contended that an analysis of this literature indicates that wherever joking is institutionalized the structural relationship between the participants tends to be characterized by five significantly interrelated structural attributes: separation, reciprocity, ambivalence, equality, and independence. I have also indicated that such joking may serve as an adjustive mechanism by providing for the concurrent maintenance of communication, control, and the culturally harmless catharsis of potentially disruptive emotions.

A variety of forms of institutionalized joking found among the Mossi of Yatenga have been cited to illustrate these points. However, I suggest that the factors which cluster with this reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism are not unique to the Mossi. Institutionalized joking reported for other parts of Africa appears to be structurally and processually similar.

## NOTES

1. A shorter version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association held in San Francisco in November, 1963. It is based on field research conducted among the Mossi from 1954 to 1956 with the assistance of a Ford Foundation Fellowship.

2. Marriage between the members of descent groups united by a joking alliance is regarded by the Mossi as highly desirable, apparently in recognition of the useful role of joking as an adjustive mechanism. Once such a marriage is contracted, however, Ego and his wife must take care that their joking insults are directed only at the younger kinsmen of the other and that the insulting remarks are personal. It would, for example, be acceptable for Ego to call his wife's younger sister a disreputable shrew but dangerous to call her a slave (a term of disrespect used frequently in joking between sibs). To refer to her as a slave would cast unflattering aspersions on her entire kin group, including her mother and father, with whom, in their new status as parents-in-law, Ego may no longer joke.

3. I believe that joking is also institutionalized between the Mossi and the Yarse, a highly acculturated ethnic minority of Mande origin who live throughout Yatenga. There is also joking between the Mossi and the indigenous blacksmith caste. Unfortunately my data on these two instances of joking are inadequate.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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who did live at the palace, only a small minority prepared the ruler's meals and shared his bed. Dim Delobson reports that Mogho Naba Kom II (1905-42) had thirty-seven wives. His son, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942-57), had twenty.[34] The present Mogho Naba, Kougri, recently married according to Western tradition and is officially monogamous.[35] There seems to be a general trend toward fewer wives among Mossi chiefs.

Mossi rulers never married for the purpose of forming state alliances, and their marriages had no political significance. The Mogho Naba's marriages were exogamous with regard to the royal lineage and to his mother's minimal lineage. Aside from these restrictions, however, the Mogho Naba could marry women from any Mossi lineage or group, including serfs, slaves, and foreign populations. It is said that when Mogho Naba Sanum (1850-90) despaired of having an heir by a Mossi woman, he took a Fulani wife.[36]

The Mogho Naba had no formal wedding ceremony. The task of introducing a new wife to the royal harem fell to the Pughtiema. She and her assistants welcomed the wife in a prescribed fashion. First they shaved all the hair from her body. They then bathed her in warm water to which shea butter and ritual herbs had been added, and during the bath they recited the ruler's genealogy to impress her with her new status.[37] The Pughtiema advised her on the need for proper deportment, and warned her that adultery was punished by death. To close the ceremony, a smith fastened to the girl's wrists and ankles the silver or brass bracelets that identified her as a wife of the Mogho Naba. If the bride was still a child, she was often allowed to return to her father's house until she reached childbearing age. If she was past the age of puberty, her marriage was consummated without further ceremony, and she joined the ranks of the ruler's wives.

The wives who lived in the palace were divided into three groups. The first group included the wives who lived with the Pughtiema in a section of the palace harem called the *zaka sanga* ("large courtyard"). These women were all past childbearing age and no longer received nocturnal visits from the Mogho Naba. They had their own fields in the vicinity of the palace and cultivated them with the aid of the samande kamba, the pages they had adopted, and their own children. The women of the second group, those of the *zagbilin* ("small courtyard"), were mostly in their thirties or forties and still sexually active. They received occasional visits from the Mogho Naba, but fewer than his younger wives. These women also cultivated their fields with the help of the young men of the court.

The third group of wives, the *dogunba* ("keepers of the household"), was the most important. The dogunba prepared the ruler's meals and satis-